

NOBLE LIVES ... AND ... NOBLE DEEDS

A

Series of Lessons for Sunday Schools,

BY VARIOUS WRITERS, ILLUSTRATING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.
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TOPIC: HONESTY.

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Noble Life:
Abraham Lincoln.

Libes and Deeds

Topic:
HONESTY.

WHO is not familiar with the earnest, rough-hewn features of Abraham Lincoln, the writer of the Emancipation Proclamation, the President during our Civil War?

He was large-hearted, shrewd, and wise, — a man quick of wit and prompt in action. Many stories are told of his kindness, his tender sympathy, his readiness to listen. We would call attention here to that rugged, uncompromising honesty, the very foundation of his life-structure. To be known as "Honest Abe" is an honor greater than any title may boast.

He was born February 12, 1809, in the wilds of Hardin (now Larue) County, Ky. Years before, Daniel Boone had explored that region, and with him went the grandfather of our hero. The home was a rude log cabin, far away from church, school, post-office, and store. Later the family moved to Indiana, then to Illinois. In all these places Lincoln's school life may have covered a year.

But it was a family bent on improvement. Every book that fell in their way was eagerly devoured, and its contents as eagerly discussed. So while the boy worked with his hands on the farm, in the shop, or store, his mind was keeping pace with his bodily development. He taught himself book-keeping, surveying, arithmetic, and English grammar. It is said he walked eight miles to borrow Kirkham's Grammar.

He split rails, managed a flat-boat, worked with tools in the fields, tended store. Whatever he did was careful, thorough work. In 1832 he was elected captain of a company to resist the encroachment of the famous Black Hawk. Soon after he entered the Legislature, then was postmaster; finally he studied law.

He grew in popularity, and was several times sent to the Legislature. In 1837 he removed to Springfield, Ill., where he became

famous in his law practice. In 1847 he entered Congress, serving two years. He became a famous speaker, and in the years following visited many States, delivering speeches on political matters. In February, 1861, he became President of the United States.

It was a perilous moment. The secession was an accomplished fact, and the air was full of treason. An attempt to assassinate Lincoln as he passed through Baltimore to Washington was discovered and prevented.

The events of the following years are well known. The war desolated our country, the slaves were set free, Lincoln was re-elected, and the Rebellion was crushed. While attending a play at Ford's Theatre, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. Thus died the greatest, wisest, gentlest President of our country since Washington.

Anecdotes of Lincoln's Honesty. — While tending store, Lincoln once sold to a woman goods to the amount of two dollars, six and a quarter cents. He discovered later that a mistake had been made, and that the store owed the customer the six and a quarter cents. He closed the store, and walked several miles that night to return the amount.

At another time a woman bought half a pound of tea. Lincoln discovered the next morning that a four-ounce weight was on the scales. He at once weighed out the remainder, and walked some distance before breakfast to return it.

He was once a postmaster in New Salem; but the office was finally discontinued. Several years after the agent called at his law office, and presented a claim of about seventeen dollars in the settlement of the New Salem affairs. Mr. Lincoln took out a little trunk, and produced the exact sum, wrapped in a linen bag. It had lain there untouched

through years of the greatest hardship and self-denial. As he said, "I never use any one's money but my own."

Side-Lights.—"Truth needs no color; beauty no pencil." — *Shakespeare*.

Honesty is the very foundation of our social life. If there were nothing sure and real to depend upon, there could be no safety for life or property.

A man builds of stone that has a fair outside but is full of inward flaws. Sooner or later his structure must give way.

An architect makes a slight error of calculation. No one would notice it, but a great building falls and lives are lost.

A merchant is deceitful at a trade, — mixes sand with his sugar. A milkman waters his milk. Sooner or later both are known as sharpers before the world.

There *must* be honesty in life. We could not lie down to sleep at night, or take a train of cars in any peace of mind, if we did not have faith in the rectitude of our fellow-beings.

How may I Cultivate Honesty? — By having full confidence in the power of truth. *By daring to do right.*

By accepting patiently any uncomfatableness or unpopularity that may arise from being a truth-loving soul.

By being exact in my statements, avoiding the use of extravagant expressions.

By giving exact return in service for money paid me in my relations with my employer.

By insisting that work done by others under my superintendence shall be honest work.

By refusing the gains of dishonest work.

By avoiding, absolutely, all games of chance, — gambling, lotteries, — wherein a return for what is invested may be exorbitant for me and disastrous to others.

By returning in full as to both quantity and quality what has been borrowed.

By never allowing a false impression to prevail if I can prevent it.

To be truly honest, my heart must be sincere toward God and full of truest kindness to all men.

I must believe firmly in the final triumph of truth.

I must guard my thoughts from evil and my lips from careless speech.

"Dare to be true; nothing can need a lie;

A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby."

I. Guard against pure and simple "smartness." A vast amount of duplicity springs from this source, — the fondness for notoriety, the common desire to appear remarkably bright, or to carry a very self-reliant air. The evil is deep in our times. Better by far be plain, honest, substantial, than to go in stolen plumage that is sure to be plucked. Exaggeration of speech, a white-fib way of telling stories, a false impression by silence or by innuendo, — these and other customs are very dangerous. They are an undertow that carries one out and off his footing of honor.

II. It is said that "honesty is the best policy." True; but it is also the best basis and the best self-help, aside from considerations of policy. "It is the highest wisdom." The word "probity" stands for the full meaning of this trait.

III. One of the most offensive beings in life is he who makes a show and boast of his honesty. It then becomes corrupt. "The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint," says Lavater. This attitude of probity, or facing everything in an honest spirit, has three forms, — honesty of motive, honesty of speech, honesty of action. The three must exist, if we would have the best result. In such a case the modesty of the individual is equal to his great worth.

QUESTIONS.

How did Lincoln's early life differ from that of a king, — say Louis XIV. ?

What influence did the studious disposition of his parents have upon him ?

What influence did the difficulty in getting books have upon him ?

How, do you think, would his progress in self-instruction compare with the progress of the ordinary boy at school ? Why ?

How did Lincoln feel about work ? What was his test ?

In Lincoln's dealings with the women in the store, would it have been an act of culpable dishonesty if he had allowed the matter to pass ?

How would it have been if he had waited until the parties again visited the store ?

What influence must his prompt obedience

to principle have had on the world ? On himself ?

What did Jesus say in a similar case ?

If you do not like or enjoy people and have no desire to see them in your home, is it ever honest to invite them to visit you ? If you think it is, state a case.

If you are not glad to see people, is it ever right to use the conventional phrases, "I am glad to see you," etc. ?

If some one presses you to give an opinion on a matter where you know you will offend by being frank, should you speak or remain silent ?

If you disapprove of individuals, which is most honest: to show your feelings by your actions, or to treat them as if you liked them ?

TO TEACHERS.

Cite additional stories as to Lincoln's characteristics.

Dwell on the evil of insincerity and lying which goes with dishonesty.

Show how terrible it is to weaken faith in each other.

Strengthen the young people against the sentiment: "Others do it;" or, "It is the way in life."

Describe the three honesties: Honesty of tongue, honesty of action, honesty of motive.